

switched data network, the database server containing account information on customers of the message delivery service, each processing server implements a router-filter and a message queue,

the message queue to store request messages that are received from a customer of the message delivery service over an external packet-switched data network,

the router-filter to obtain a request message from the queue while polling the queue for pending requests, validate a customer associated with said request message after accessing the account information in the database server, and determine to which of the plurality of first outbound resources to assign said request message,

each of the first resources being capable of converting an input request message into a format capable of being received by a fax machine over a telephone network.

*cont.*  
<sup>2</sup> 31. (New) The system of claim <sup>1</sup> 30 wherein the internal data network is a private data network.

<sup>3</sup> 32. (New) The system of claim <sup>2</sup> 31 wherein the external data network is the Internet.

<sup>4</sup> 33. (New) The system of claim <sup>3</sup> 32 wherein the request messages are received from the customers via one of a mail transport protocol server and a hypertext transport protocol server on the Internet.

<sup>5</sup> 34. (New) The system of claim <sup>1</sup> 30 wherein the router-filter is to prioritize a plurality of request messages that have been obtained from the queue and that are assigned to an outbound resource.

~~6~~ 35. (New) The system of claim ~~30~~<sup>1</sup> wherein the router-filter is to determine which of the plurality of first outbound resources to assign said request message to, based on which resource offers the least cost of delivering said request message.

~~7~~ 36. (New) The system of claim ~~30~~<sup>1</sup> wherein the router-filter is to generate an error message that indicates an error in delivering said request message as reported by the outbound resource to which said request message was assigned.

~~8~~ 37. (new) The system of claim ~~30~~<sup>1</sup> further comprising:

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a plurality of second outbound resources each being capable of converting an input request message into a format capable of being played back to a telephone over a telephone network, wherein the router-filter is to determine to which of the first and second resources said request message is to be assigned, based on a message type of said request matching a capability of one of a first resource and a second resource.

~~9~~ 38. (New) The system of claim ~~30~~<sup>1</sup> further comprising:

a plurality of second outbound resources each being capable of converting an input request message into a format capable of being transmitted to a paging terminal over one of (1) a telephone network and (2) a paging gateway over an external packet-switched network, wherein the route-filter is to determine to which of the first and second resources said request message is to be assigned, based on a message type of said request matching a capability of one of a first resource and second resource.

~~10~~ 39. (New) An article of manufacture for supporting a message delivery system, comprising:

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cont.*

a machine accessible medium containing data that, when accessed by a machine, cause a plurality of processing servers to communicate with a plurality of first outbound resources and a database server all as part of an internal packet-switched data network, each processing server implements a router-filter and a message queue, the message queue to store request messages that are received from a customer of the message delivery service over an external packet switched data network, the router-filter to obtain a request message from the queue, validate a customer associated with said request message after accessing account information in the database server, and determine which of the plurality of first outbound resources to assign said request message, each of the first resources being capable of converting an input request message into a format capable of being received by a fax machine over a telephone network.

*11*  
~~40.~~ (New) The article of manufacture of claim *10* ~~39~~ wherein the medium includes further data which, when executed by the machine, cause the internal network to perform as a private data network.

*12*  
~~41.~~ (New) The article of manufacture of claim *10* ~~39~~ wherein the medium includes further data which allow the request messages to be received from a customer over the Internet.

*13*  
~~42.~~ (New) The article of manufacture of claim *12* ~~41~~ wherein the medium includes further data which allow the request messages to be received from the customer via one of a mail transport protocol server and a hypertext transport protocol server on the Internet.

<sup>14</sup>  
~~43.~~ (New) The article of manufacture of claim <sup>18</sup>~~39~~ wherein the medium includes further data which, when executed by the machine, cause the router-filter to prioritize a plurality of request messages that have been obtained from the queue and that are assigned to an outbound resource.

<sup>15</sup>  
~~44.~~ (New) The article of manufacture of claim <sup>10</sup>~~39~~ wherein the medium includes further data which, when executed by the machine, cause the router-filter to determine which of the plurality of first outbound resources to assign said request message to, based on which resource offers the least cost of delivering said request message.

<sup>16</sup>  
~~45.~~ (New) The article of manufacture of claim <sup>10</sup>~~39~~ wherein the medium includes further data which, when executed by the machine, cause the router-filter to generate an error message that indicates an error in delivering said request message as reported by the outbound resource to which said request message was assigned.

<sup>17</sup>  
~~46.~~ (New) The article of manufacture of claim <sup>10</sup>~~39~~ wherein the medium includes further data which, when executed by the machine, cause one of the plurality of processing servers to be capable of (1) communicating with a plurality of second outbound resources each being capable of converting an input request message into a format capable of being played back to a telephone over the telephone network and (2) determining which of the first and second outbound resources to assign said request message based on a message type of said request message matching the capability of an outbound resource.

<sup>18</sup>  
~~47.~~ (New) The article of manufacture of claim <sup>10</sup>~~39~~, wherein the medium

includes further data which, when executed by the machine, cause one of the plurality of processing servers to be capable of (1) communicating with a plurality of second outbound resources each being capable of converting an input request message into a format capable of being transmitted to one of (1) a paging terminal over a telephone network and (2) a paging gateway over an external packet-switched network, and (2) determining which of the first and second outbound resources to assign said request message based on a message type of said request message matching the capability of an outbound resource.

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(New) A method for supporting a message delivery service, comprising:

communicating with a plurality of first outbound resources and a data base server over an internal packet-switched data network, each of the plurality of first outbound resources being capable of converting a request message into a format capable of being received by a fax machine over a telephone network, the database server containing account information on customers of the message delivery service;

obtaining a request message from a message queue, the queue storing a plurality of request messages that are received from customers of the message delivery service and that were sent from an external packet-switched data network;

validating a customer associated with said obtained request message after accessing the account information in the database server; and

determining to which of the plurality of first outbound resources said obtained request message should be assigned.

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(New) The method of claim 48 wherein the internal data network is a

private data network.

~~21~~ 50. (New) The method of claim ~~19~~ 48 wherein the external data network is the Internet.

~~22~~ 51. (New) The method of claim ~~21~~ 50 wherein the request messages are received from the customers via one of a mail transport protocol server and a hypertext transport protocol server on the Internet.

~~23~~ 52. (New) The method of claim ~~19~~ 48 further comprising:  
prioritizing the delivery of a plurality of request messages that have been obtained from the queue and that are assigned to an outbound resource.

~~24~~ 53. (New) The method of claim ~~19~~ 48 further comprising:  
determining which of the plurality of first outbound resources to assign said obtained request message to, based on which resource offers the least cost of delivering said obtained request message.

~~25~~ 54. (New) The method of claim ~~19~~ 48 further comprising:  
generating an error message that indicates an error in delivering said obtained request message as reported by the outbound resource to which said obtained request message was assigned.

~~26~~ 55. (New) The method of claim ~~19~~ 48 further comprising communicating with a plurality of second outbound resources each being capable of converting a request message into a format being capable of being played back to a telephone over a telephone network; and

determining to which of the plurality of first and second outbound resources said obtained message should be assigned, based on a message type of said request message matching a capability of an outbound resource.

*27* ~~56~~. (New) The method of claim *19* ~~48~~, further comprising:

*Final*  
communicating with a plurality of second outbound resources each being capable of converting an input request message into a format capable of being transmitted to one of (1) a paging terminal over a telephone network and (2) a paging gateway over an external packet-switched network; and

determining to which of the plurality of first and second outbound resources said obtained message should be assigned, based on a message type of said request message matching a capability of an outbound resource.

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